

canon of early modern Africanist scholarship. Related to this problem is the question of the value and limitations of the *Description* as a primary source. It is perfectly reasonable to claim that the text and its accompanying images reflect the mental worlds of their creators more than the historical reality they purport to describe, but for a fifty chapter work devoted to the taxonomic description of ‘people, customs, zoology, and botany’, including an Akan vocabulary, such a claim requires some explanation. This lacunae is complicated by Sutton’s claim that Africanists have uncritically used this and other travelogues as simple sources of fact (p. 197), but this is clearly a positivist straw man belied by her own references (see also p. 17, n. 2, and p. 230, n. 22). It would be interesting to learn what facts the author of the *Description* chose to relate, and why, since these bear directly on the value and limitations of the text as a source. They surely informed how the *Description*’s readers understood its engravings.

Ultimately, this is a sound and truly interdisciplinary study of the cultural and intellectual underpinnings of an early and widely reprinted contribution to African ethnography. Scholars interested in the history of anthropology, Western images of Africa, and the visual culture of early modern imperialism will profit from reading it.

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LAND TITLES AND POLITICAL ENTITLEMENT

Land, Mobility, and Belonging in West Africa.

By Carola Lentz.

Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013. Pp. xii+331. \$85, hardback (ISBN 978-0-253-00953-1); \$30, paperback (ISBN 978-0-253-00957-9).

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Key Words: West Africa, ethnicity, land, migration, ritual.

The developments of agricultural pioneer fronts, transhumance patterns, trade networks, clandestine flows, and migratory practices have contributed to depictions of Africa as a mobile continent. They have also challenged the very meaning of place and belonging. In a context of pronounced mobility, who can legitimately claim to be autochthonous? On what grounds should property rights be institutionalized? And how can spatially dispersed communities maintain social cohesion? *Land, Mobility, and Belonging in West Africa* addresses these issues in a masterly way. Building on the case of two agrarian societies in the Black Volta region, anthropologist Carola Lentz details how the tension that exists between the imperatives of mobility and the need for stable access to land constitutes a powerful driver of social change.

The book starts with a detailed analysis of migration-and-settlement narratives, which typically describe how a group of hunters or farmers migrated in search of a new settlement. Several attempts and various encounters with animals and earth deities are usually necessary before the group reaches a suitable uninhabited area. The clearance of the bush is

then used to exercise legitimate rights over land and membership in the local community *vis-à-vis* more recent immigrants. Examining the history of agricultural expansion from the late eighteenth to the late twentieth century between northern Ghana and southwestern Burkina Faso, Lentz describes how settlement and property rights arise from the continuous struggle over first-comer status and how such rights can be converted into access to land resources, which, subsequently, may lead to political authority.

This richly researched book contains a number of crucial findings pertaining to the spatiality of West African agrarian societies. Reconstructing the historical migration of Sisala and Dagara farmers, Lentz emphasizes that, whatever the complexity of migration patterns, land ownership is a symbol of belonging for lineages scattered across the region. She also demonstrates that the occupation of different ecological niches leads to differences in the ethos and pattern of mobility; while the first-comer Sisala have developed an explicit ideology of stability and sedentariness, latecomer Dagara present themselves as frontiersmen. The translocal communities developed by the Dagara appear well-suited to the uncertainties faced by West African agriculturalists. Known as patrilan systems, these descent groups without a named ancestor are flexible enough to allow Dagara to travel over great distances and still find someone to whom they are related.

The book also makes an important contribution to the study of political and religious power. Focusing on ritual power, Lentz explains that earth shrines were used to secure property rights regarding land and other natural resources in addition to providing spiritual protection and fertility. The author shows that earth priests responsible for rituals and earth shrines played an important role in the struggle over economic interests and political privileges. The book details how earth shrines accompanying the migration of agriculturalists could be abandoned, restored, and used as spatial boundaries and how claims to land ownership have gradually been translated into entitlements, challenging the notion that African societies are indifferent to territorialisation and property.

The *longue durée* perspective adopted by the author appears particularly well adapted to the understanding of how agrarian societies migrate, how they maintain social relations and property claims over time and space, and how they deal with the actions of the state. Building on a number of colonial and postcolonial examples, the author demonstrates how property rights have been continuously contested in the savannah of the Black Volta region. Numerous examples of land conflicts from Burkina Faso and Ghana illustrate this point: as long as land remains a symbol of belonging and as long as the state is unable to guarantee property rights, land disputes are likely to remain inconclusive. Lentz argues that the colonial period actually reduced the recourse to small-scale warfare in the appropriation of new territories and led to an increasing ethnicization of property rights, which was hardly challenged by postcolonial regimes. Today, in a context characterized by a plurality of land legislations and institutions, the securitization of property rights and access to land resources relies heavily on a sustained investment in social networks and political alliances.

Land, Mobility, and Belonging in West Africa presents a synthesis of the research conducted by the author in the last twenty years. The book is based on almost 200 interviews conducted with West African farmers in Dagara and Sisala villages, and supplemented with an analysis of the spatial distribution of settlements and lineages segments. More than 15 maps greatly help illuminate the complexity of migration patterns in the region.

The book makes a remarkable contribution to the growing literature on mobility in Africa. Its emphasis on both the social and spatial strategies of West African agriculturalists makes it a highly recommended read for scholars and policymakers dealing with migration, mobility, resource management, and land conflict resolution in West Africa.

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AN ENCYCLOPEDIC TREASURE

Le trésor des secrets et des idées fécondes, by Muhammad b. Sa'īd Al-Zammūrī Al-Ṣanhājī.

Edited by Belkacem Daouadi.

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Key Words: North Africa, Islam, religion, text editions.

Sometime before his death in 1392, the Moroccan jurist Muḥammad b. Sa'īd al-Zammūrī al-Ṣanhājī composed *Kanz al-asrār wa-lawāqih al-afkār* (*Le trésor des secrets et des idées fécondes*), a sprawling work of prose whose ambition was nothing less than to gather in one text the best of accumulated knowledge about the nature and origin of the cosmos, the place of humans within it, and the eventual day of resurrection. Though the work would continue to be copied in the centuries following Ṣanhājī's death, today its author is not well known among either religious scholars or university-based academics. By crafting a complete critical edition of Ṣanhājī's monumental work, Belkacem Daouadi has sought to rescue Ṣanhājī from scholarly oblivion and argue on behalf of his relevance to the history of the medieval Islamic world, the Maghreb in particular. The resulting Arabic edition of *Le trésor*, part of the French-led VECMAS project (Valorisation et Edition Critique des Manuscrits Arabes Sub-sahariens), is an impressive achievement that complements the abridged French translation already in print.

In a brief introduction, Daouadi presents a picture of Ṣanhājī as he appears in various biographical dictionaries. Among the authors of such dictionaries, readers of this journal will be most familiar with Ahmed Baba, the celebrated scholar of Timbuktu who was familiar with Ṣanhājī's writings and called *Le trésor* a 'delectable work'. But other than confirming his role as a practicing *qadi* who probably studied in Cairo and Alexandria, Ṣanhājī's biography is rather sparse. And so Daouadi uses the rest of the introduction to discuss his approach to editing Ṣanhājī's text. In short, after comparing manuscript copies in Rabat, Algiers, Cairo, and Paris, he tracked down each of the text's references to the Qur'an and the *hadith corpus* as well as to other scholarly works. Such editing on its own represents an enormous effort since, as Daouadi notes, Qur'anic verses and *hadith* reports rarely appeared in full in manuscript copies. Instead, they were usually limited to a few opening words, with the assumption that the reader would be familiar with the cited passages and able to complete them by memory. The rest of the book is given over to Ṣanhājī's text. Divided into four parts, it treats in turn the upper realm, including the